



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION COMMISSION ACTION

This is not a Certificate of Appropriateness and cannot be used to acquire permits

June 2, 2021

HDRC CASE NO: 2021-246

ADDRESS: 875 E ASHBY PLACE

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 3053 BLK LOT E 169.12 FT OF 13, W IRR 42.38 FT 14, P-100 (0.142 AC) & P-101 (0.3304 AC)

APPLICANT: Luis Miguel Martinez/Area Real Estate - 1221 Broadway Ste 104

OWNER: 875 East Ashby Place, LP - 1221 Broadway Ste 104

REQUEST:

The applicant requests a Finding of Historic Significance for the property located at 875 E Ashby Place.

FINDINGS:

- a. The request for landmark designation was initiated by Luis Miguel Martinez, Area Real Estate, on behalf of the property owner.
- b. **HISTORIC CONTEXT:** The property at 875 E Ashby Place is a two-story Art Deco-style commercial building with a basement designed by Ayres and Ayres and built in 1933 for Borden's Produce Company, with additions built in 1946, 1952, 1956, and 1963. It is located in the Tobin Hill neighborhood of City Council District 1. 875 E Ashby Place, LP, currently owns the property. Borden's Creamery, also known as Mistletoe Creamery, was a Fort Worth-based corporation that operated facilities throughout Texas; by 1933, Mistletoe, founded in 1918 as Nissley Creamery Company but renamed Mistletoe by 1922, was one of the major dairy producers in the state. It opened its first San Antonio Factory on the near east side in 1926. The plant was soon outmoded, and the creamery purchased land on E Ashby Place in 1932 for a new plant. The new creamery was built during a period of rapid consolidation and modernization in the dairy industry, and the planned facility was promised to be "one of the finest and most up-to-date plants in Texas." The Art Deco building had exterior walls finished in cast concrete, purportedly the first building of its type in San Antonio. The 1993 building had two-story, two-bay pavilions flanking the taller central tower and one-story, three-bay wings to the east and west. Mistletoe transferred the creamery from the near east side to E Ashby St by November 1933. The plant was enlarged several times in subsequent decades to address increase in demand for milk and milk products. Ownership of Borden's evolved in the late 1900s; when it finalized sale of the property in 1999, it was known as Milk Products, Inc, and operated a distribution center from the subject property. Atlee and Robert Ayres, the father and son architects comprising Ayres and Ayres, were among Texas' most prominent architects by the time the creamery was built. The company operated from 1901 to 1977, and their designs included Tudor, Colonia Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Moderne. Ayres and Ayres was the architect for all phases of the main structure, including additional work in 1956 and 1963-64.
- c. **SITE CONTEXT:** North of downtown San Antonio, the property is located in an industrial corridor that runs along the river. The San Antonio River runs roughly north-south to the east of the subject project while Highway 281 abuts the north side of the property. Across the highway is a large golf course. West of the warehouse district is a low-rise residential district. South of the building is the back side of an elementary school and gym playground. Nearby local historic landmarks include 101 W Josephine, 115 W Josephine, Brackenridge Park and Golf Course, and 335 W Josephine. The property is also within blocks of the E French Place, River Road, Monte Vista, and Tobin Hill historic districts.
- d. **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:** The primary elevation is organized around a central tower, dating to the original construction. The primary entrance is roughly centered within a historic, one-story addition flanked by five

structural bays to the east and six structural bays to the west. Vertical concrete pilasters demarcate structural bays on the primary elevation, rising from just below the height of the window to the parapet. The parapet is flat with a course of reeded stucco. The primary entrance is recessed, accessible by tile-clad stairs that lead back to an additional set of concrete stairs in the vestibule. Simple, stucco-clad concrete ornament frames the recessed entry with mosaic tile inlay. The recessed entrance contains a wood-frame storefront system with paired, fully glazed doors with transoms and sidelights. The second floor of the primary elevation is recessed from the first floor and represents the original primary elevation of the building. Detailing on the second-floor mirrors that of the first floor with vertical pilasters designating structural bays organized around the central tower as well as a reeded-stucco parapet. A shallow pyramidal roof tops the central tower clad in yellow, glazed tile with a central, cylindrical metal and glass light beacon. The remaining elevations are more utilitarian in character and feature blank stucco walls. Rear and side elevations lack stucco ornament aside from fluting at the parapet. Loading docks, ramps, and stairs line the rear and side elevations.

e. EVALUATION: In order to be eligible for historic landmark designation, properties shall meet at least three (3) of the 16 criteria listed. Staff evaluated the structure against all 16 criteria and determined that it was consistent with UDC sec. 35-607(b):

4. Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, state, or nation; all phases of the primary creamery building were designed by prominent Texas architects Atlee and Robert Ayres of the firm Ayres and Ayres.

5. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials; it is an example of an Art Deco commercial building and was purportedly the first building in San Antonio to use cast concrete cladding.

11. It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United States; the 1933 building and additions through 1964 were built for Borden's Creamery, also known as Mistletoe Creamery, one of the major dairy producers in the state in the 1930s. The company owned and continued to operate from the property until 1999.

f. The City offers a tax incentive for the substantial rehabilitation of historic properties because historic landmarks possess cultural and historical value and contribute to the overall quality and character of the City and its neighborhoods. If historic designation is approved, rehabilitation and restoration work may be eligible for this incentive. State and Federal tax incentives are also available for properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and provide substantial relief for rehabilitation projects.

g. If the HDRC approves the Finding of Historic Significance, then the recommendation for designation is submitted to the zoning commission. The zoning commission will schedule a hearing and then forward its recommendation to the City Council. City Council has the ultimate authority to approve the historic designation zoning overlay.


h. Per UDC Sec. 35-453, once the commission makes a recommendation for designation, property owners must receive a written approval (a Certificate of Appropriateness) for any exterior work until the City Council makes their final decision.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of a finding of historic significance and that the Historic and Design Review Commission should recommend approval for the landmark designation of 875 E Ashby Place to the Zoning Commission and to the City Council based on findings a through e.

COMMISSION ACTION:

Approved as submitted.



Shanon Shea Miller
Historic Preservation Officer